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New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral . . . . . (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Agenda item 44 *(continued)*

The situation in the Middle East

Draft resolution (A/50/L.70)

Mr. Keating (New Zealand): New Zealand has been shocked at the recent events in Israel and Lebanon, and the New Zealand people have been outraged at the death and destruction visited upon innocent civilians in both countries.

This cycle of violence must stop. Each attack by either side becomes the justification for a further response. We therefore call upon both sides to stop, and to stop now.

New Zealand has no political agenda in the Middle East, and we are not a party to anyone else's agenda. New Zealand looks at the issues from the perspective of a distant but concerned country: concerned for peace and security in the region as a whole, concerned for the legitimate rights of a country whose territory is illegally occupied and concerned for the innocent civilians in both Israel and Lebanon who have become victims of terrorism and the military response to terrorism.

The current violence in Lebanon cannot be considered in isolation. It is a response to violence directed against Israel from Lebanese territory. We know that the options facing any State confronted by terrorist actions are few. And we know that a limited response can be a legitimate exercise of the right of self-defence.

However, New Zealand has an instinctive caution when military force is used in these kinds of situations. In this context, the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols are very clear, and measures taken in self-defence or reprisal have to be assessed in this light.

In our view, both international law and the pragmatic lessons of history point in the same direction. Responses have to be limited in time and in scope and be proportional to the attacks to which they respond.

When military operations go beyond this, they become counterproductive and impossible to justify, and, worse, they create the *casus belli* for further responses in kind. And so we see a cycle of escalation and, in the end, inevitably, in the fog of war, errors which result in horrific civilian casualties.

The Security Council, in resolution 1052 (1996), called for an immediate cease-fire and cessation of hostilities, but the fighting continues. It is timely that this debate now gives the General Assembly the opportunity to add its voice in calling on both sides to stop the hostilities. In this context, we are disappointed that draft resolution A/50/L.70 focuses on only one of the parties to the conflict. New Zealand could support a draft resolution which treated both sides in an appropriately balanced way, and we would welcome further work on the draft resolution in that direction.

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But we are reminded that these recent events in both Lebanon and Israel simply underline that the basic problem remains. A peace settlement must be reached. New Zealand firmly supports the current Middle East process. The General Assembly should, at this critical point, reinforce the peace process. We cannot allow the setbacks of recent days to derail it. That would only play into the hands of extremists and vindicate terrorism, and we would then all be the losers.

In our opinion the best prospects for securing, in a sustainable way, the goal which Lebanon has put before us — restoration of respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity — lie in a peace settlement emerging from the current peace process and based on resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

Finally, we need to say some words about the obligation of all States Members of this Organization to respect the security of United Nations personnel. I make this comment both as a troop contributor — because New Zealand has a long tradition of contributing troops to peace-keeping in the Middle East — we are present in both the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) — and as a supporter of the United Nations Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

We believe that article 7 of the Convention, which requires that "all appropriate measures" be taken to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel, states a principle of general applicability. Parties to a conflict must respect the special status of United Nations peace-keepers. It is imperative that military action which puts United Nations personnel at risk, whether intentionally or not, be avoided.

In giving our deepest sympathy and support to Fiji for the casualties and losses incurred, we cannot forget the equally innocent Lebanese civilians who thought they had achieved sanctuary with the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and who lost their lives.

That incident only underlines what we said earlier: when the dogs of war are unleashed, not only is the cycle of violence perpetuated, trapping civilians within it, but the peace-keepers — whom we, the United Nations, have sent to keep the peace — are eventually victimized as well.

So our plea today is that everyone involved should pause, should stop the fighting and, with the help of other countries that are supporting the peace process, should re-engage with strengthened determination to bring the peace process to a successful conclusion.

The President: I now call on the representative of Indonesia to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.70.

Mr. Poernomo (Indonesia): It is an honour and a privilege for my delegation to introduce, on behalf of the 25 sponsoring countries, the draft resolution contained in document A/50/L.70 regarding the situation in the Middle East. It is entitled "The Israeli military attacks against Lebanon and their consequences".

In its preambular paragraphs, the draft resolution expresses grave concern at the consequences which the ongoing fighting could have for the peace and security of the region and for the furthering of the peace process in the Middle East. It affirms full support for that process and for the need to achieve real progress, especially on the Lebanese and the Syrian tracks of the negotiations. It expresses similar concern at all attacks on civilian targets, including residential areas, and at the loss of life and suffering among civilians.

It stresses the need for all concerned to respect fully the rules of international humanitarian law with regard to the protection of civilians, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

It expresses grave concern at actions which seriously threaten the safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and impede the implementation of its mandate, in particular, the shelling incident on 18 April 1996, which resulted in heavy loss of life among civilians at the UNIFIL site.

It takes into consideration the statement of 19 April 1996, issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which formally condemned the shelling of civilians who had taken refuge in a UNIFIL base in the village of Qana.

It expresses concern at the bombardment of the internationally protected archaeological and cultural sites and monuments in the city of Tyre.

The draft resolution contains 10 salient operative paragraphs.

Operative paragraphs 1 and 2 call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and support the ongoing diplomatic efforts to this end.

Operative paragraph 3 condemns the Israeli military attacks against the civilian population in Lebanon, especially against the United Nations base in Qana, which violates the rules of international humanitarian law pertaining to the protection of civilians, and expresses its grave concern and sorrow over the loss of life and serious injuries to innocent men, women and children.

Operative paragraph 4 calls upon Israel to cease immediately its military action against Lebanese territorial integrity and withdraw its forces from all Lebanese territory, in conformity with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Operative paragraph 5 calls for strict respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries.

Operative paragraph 6 calls upon all concerned to respect the safety and security of civilians in conformity with the rules of international humanitarian law.

Operative paragraph 7 considers that Lebanon is entitled to appropriate redress for the destruction it has suffered and that Israel is responsible for such compensation.

Operative paragraph 8 requests the Secretary-General to dispatch a special technical mission to the area to study and prepare, within a month, and in cooperation with UNIFIL, a report on the human and material losses and damages resulting from the ongoing hostilities.

Operative paragraph 9 calls upon Member States to offer humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of the population and to assist the Government of Lebanon in the reconstruction of the country and requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the United Nations and its agencies play their part in meeting the humanitarian needs of the civilian population.

Finally, operative paragraph 10 requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly on the progress made in the implementation of this draft resolution.

It is the hope of the sponsors that the draft resolution will receive the overwhelming support of Member States. Such an endorsement, reflecting the will of the international community, will have a profound impact in bringing about the termination of hostilities, thereby ending the suffering of the people of Lebanon.

Mr. Camacho Omiste (Bolivia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Bolivian delegation listened with interest to the statement of His Excellency the President of the Lebanese Republic to the General Assembly.

The primary purpose of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security, and to that end this Organization must in every case, in the words of the Charter,

> "take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace".

Undoubtedly, the situation in the Middle East is of profound concern to the international community, and once again it puts to the test our capacity to collectively find solutions to the grave problems of our time. It is true that progress has been made in the peace negotiations towards putting an end to this painful burden of the historical past, but not enough progress to bring tranquillity to the populations involved. Many men and women have given their lives in this endeavour, including the late Prime Minister of Israel and Nobel Peace laureate, Yitzhak Rabin. Justice, security and, as a consequence, respect for human rights have not yet been achieved in this process.

Bolivia opposes and condemns any form or manifestation of terrorism, regardless of its origin, and reiterates its full support for the Middle East peace process initiated at the Madrid Conference of 1991. It also reiterates its support for the declaration of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, who at their Conference in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, in October 1995, called for complete respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

Bolivia invokes the right of all peoples of the world to international justice and security. We call for effective compliance with international humanitarian law and the observance of human rights. Therefore, we condemn the bombing in Qana of the United Nations shelter intended to protect the civilian population of Lebanon. We express our condolences and solidarity to the families of the victims and to the Government and people of Lebanon.

It is the duty of the United Nations to establish a link between great principles and the realities of political power and positive law so that peace, respect for human rights and international justice and security cease to be unattainable abstractions and become historical realities of our time.

Mr. Kausikan (Singapore): The current prolonged and tragic violence in Lebanon, as well as the acts of terrorism in Israel that preceded and provoked it, are irresponsible and retrograde actions that have placed the Middle East peace process in jeopardy. They threaten to reactivate a cycle of conflict and bloodshed. They only play into the hands of minorities that do not see peace as being in their interest.

Israel has always claimed a legitimate right to security within internationally recognized borders. But Lebanon, too, has a legitimate right to security. It, too, has rights to territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence within its internationally recognized boundaries. All States in the region should enjoy the same rights. For them to do so, all parties in the Middle East must be consistent in mutually respecting these rights and the principles from which they are derived. Natural justice and political logic tell us that peace and security are indivisible and that violence breeds violence.

Any attack on civilian targets is unwarranted. The world deplores terrorist acts against civilian targets. So, too, do we deplore military attacks against a civilian population. International humanitarian law with regard to the protection of civilians in conflict situations is a fundamental interest of the entire international community that must be respected everywhere, by everyone, whatever the circumstances. Any attack on civilians should be denounced. Any civilian casualty must be a matter of shock and dismay to the international community.

The deaths of two United Nations peace-keepers in Lebanon are also of grave concern to the entire international community. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) should not be obstructed in carrying out its mandate. The safety of United Nations peace-keepers and civilians under United Nations protection must be ensured if UNIFIL is to carry out its assigned functions and responsibilities.

Singapore welcomes Security Council resolution 1052 (1996), which was unanimously adopted on 18 April 1996. We hope that it will be immediately and unequivocally implemented. In taking cognizance of the recent tragedy, we believe that the General Assembly should more strongly and directly reaffirm the importance of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict as a significant contribution to strengthening international peace and security, as set out in General Assembly resolution 50/21, on the Middle East peace process, of 4 December 1995.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey): We have been following with serious concern the aggravation of the situation in the Middle East in general, and in Lebanon in particular. Despite the Security Council's appeal for an immediate cease-fire in resolution 1052 (1996), we have witnessed further suffering inflicted on the civilian population of the region. In this context, we are deeply shocked and grieved by the heavy loss of life at a United Nations camp in Qana. The indiscriminate killing of innocent people, including women and children, who had taken refuge at a United Nations site, is totally unacceptable. I would like to express the deep indignation of the Turkish people over this deplorable act of violence. I would also like to extend once again our condolences and sincere sympathy to the people and Government of Lebanon.

The recent events have clearly demonstrated that peace is a very valuable commodity. Shaken as it may be, peace is still the only solution to the problems of the region. We are all historically responsible for restoring the hopes for peace and the prospects for prosperity. Despite the current escalation of the tensions in the region, we believe that, in the end, reason will prevail. The peoples of the region should, and will, continue their journey towards peace. We are aware that the road is not an easy one and that there will be more difficulties ahead. However, the fact that the vicious circle of violence can be broken only by concrete steps towards peace fosters our optimism for the future.

It has been the consistent position of my Government that terrorism constitutes the biggest threat to the peace process. The struggle against terrorism is a legitimate right of the countries of the region. As my delegation stated in the Security Council on 15 April

1996, terrorism must be eliminated in order for the quest for peace and stability in the Middle East to succeed. We also emphasized that, at the same time, it is necessary that no harm should come to innocent people while this struggle is being carried out and that it must be carried out within the bounds of lawfulness. Regrettably, our calls and similar other appeals have fallen on deaf ears. The memory of those who lost their lives in Qana should bring us together for a renewed commitment to peace and to a common struggle against terrorism. All the countries in the region must cooperate in fighting terrorism.

The plight of the innocent Lebanese people requires the immediate attention and action of the international community. Having finally achieved domestic peace and stability, they have been trying to rebuild their country, which was devastated after long years of civil war. While doing this, they have been caught in, and fallen victim to, yet another armed conflict. However, they can control neither the causes nor the effects of this conflict. When terrorist acts intensify, Lebanon is blamed. But when there is a cease-fire which leads to the silence of the guns, the praise goes to others. This is an injustice. First, Lebanon should gain the ability to extend the authority of its Government over all its territory. Only then could the Lebanese Government be asked to stop terrorist acts originating in its country. I wish to repeat our call for respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries.

Finally, I would like to re-emphasize our conviction that the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 425 (1978), constitutes one of the indispensable pillars of a just and viable peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Gambari (Nigeria): It is with great concern that we in Nigeria have been following developments with regard to the military actions of Israel in Lebanon. The barrage and bombardments along the Lebanese coast, in Lebanese villages and towns, including parts of Beirut, and in the Bekaa valley, along with other large-scale military operations, have wrought enormous destruction and taken many victims, the majority of whom are civilians, and have resulted in the attendant refugee problems. They have also jeopardized the efforts of the Lebanese people in rebuilding and reconstructing their country after decades of civil war.

We consider these attacks on Lebanon by Israel as a clear violation of the principles of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon. Israel claims that its military actions are within its legitimate right to self-defence. It is difficult for us to see how the firing of Katyusha rockets by Hezbollah into northern Israel, condemnable as it is, can be equated with the Israeli artillery bombardments, sea and air attacks and other missile attacks directed at the civilian populations in Lebanese villages, towns and cities, resulting in many deaths, enormous suffering and extensive destruction of property. Even the headquarters of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has not been spared, as UNIFIL buildings have been damaged and four Fijian peace-keepers killed. My delegation expresses its condolences to the Government of Fiji and the families of the deceased peace-keepers.

We wish to remind both Israel and Hezbollah of the need at all times to respect the sanctity of United Nations peace-keepers. We take a dim view of this growing contempt and disregard for our Blue Helmets anywhere in the world, whoever is responsible.

The international community cannot afford to watch from the sidelines the tragedy that is now unfolding before our very eyes in that part of the world. Unfortunately, the Security Council has not been able to take firm and forthright action to put a stop to the carnage. We of course note the adoption of resolution 1052 (1996), but wish it had contained elements capable of providing an adequate and appropriate response to the crisis we are witnessing. None the less, we call on the parties to agree to a cease-fire and to resume negotiations on the political problems between them. An early agreement for the cessation of hostilities would certainly enable the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies to address the serious humanitarian consequences of this latest chapter of tragedy in the Middle East.

Mr. Camacho Omiste (Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Until this latest tragedy, my Government had been encouraged by the positive developments that have taken place in the Middle East region. Over the past few years the international community has witnessed significant progress in the Middle East peace process, particularly in the Palestinian-Israeli and Jordanian-Israeli tracks. We have equally been very hopeful that a breakthrough would soon be achieved in the Lebanese-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli tracks, leading perhaps to a comprehensive and just settlement in the Middle East, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425

(1978). We now feel saddened by these latest developments, which will no doubt make further progress very difficult and could potentially damage the entire process.

No one can doubt or downgrade the legitimate security concerns of Israel and its sovereign right to protect its citizens. The attacks by Hezbollah on the civilian population in northern Israel are totally unacceptable, and we strongly condemn them. What is more, they cannot in any way advance Hezbollah's objective of getting Israeli forces out of Lebanon. In our view, the legitimate interests and concerns of both sides can best be assured by full compliance with and full implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, particularly resolution 425 (1978).

In our view, the peace process is now delicately balanced between continued progress, on the one hand, and relapse to the all too familiar landscape of violence and bloodshed in the region, on the other. That is why we believe that all the parties must now exercise utmost restraint and place the interest of peace in the region over and above any short-term political or strategic gains. In the absence of such an approach, we fear that the vicious cycle of violence and killings would be renewed and, indeed, heightened. The people of the region do not deserve such a prospect and have a right to expect a better future for themselves and for their families. The General Assembly has a role to play in the charting of that future, and in this regard a strong resolution from this body would be a welcome development.

Mr. Butler (Australia): This is an important session of the General Assembly, as reflected by the fact that earlier this week the President of Lebanon was at this rostrum.

Australia is appalled by the events in northern Israel and Lebanon which have been taking place during the past two weeks. The toll of the violence, intimidation and insecurity which have cast a shadow over the lives of so many people in both countries, together with the loss of life and the displacement of many innocent people, are a cause of serious concern to the Australian Government and to the Australian people.

In recent days in this Assembly, in the open debate in the Security Council on 15 April and in the formal meeting of the Council on 18 April, we have listened carefully to voices from within the region and beyond it. We add Australia's voice to the calls for restraint. We, too, have been appalled by the immense human suffering caused by attacks against civilian targets. Attacks on civilians and on United Nations peace-keepers, wherever they may be, are totally unacceptable and contrary to the norms of international law. We call for respect for the safety and security of civilians, the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, all relevant Security Council resolutions and the principles of international humanitarian law. In particular, Australia strongly supports the call by the Security Council and by world leaders for an immediate end to hostilities. This is all the more necessary given the displacement of many thousands of families in both Lebanon and Israel and the intolerable human suffering, including the terrible loss of life at Qana. We support the diplomatic efforts being undertaken by the United States and by others directed to that end.

Australia deeply regrets the casualties suffered by United Nations forces seeking to carry out their mission in southern Lebanon and working to serve the cause of peace. We wish particularly to acknowledge the Fijian peace-keepers and express to the Fijian Government and to the Fijian people our appreciation for the role they have played, particularly during the recent tragic events at Qana. We urge all parties to act to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and its personnel, including by refraining from conducting acts of hostility against or close to civilian or United Nations installations. Attempts to destroy the progress that has been made towards peace between Israel and its neighbours in the Middle East must not be allowed to succeed.

Australia is implacably opposed to terrorism in all its forms. The violence must end. A cease-fire is the essential first step towards the resumption of negotiations for a comprehensive and enduring peace settlement in the Middle East. It must continue to be tirelessly sought.

A durable settlement would need to reflect certain key elements. Israel's security must be ensured. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Israel and Lebanon must be respected and preserved. A settlement must engage those countries in the region, including Syria, which bears some responsibility to help end Hezbollah attacks against Israel. A settlement must provide the Lebanese Government the opportunity to negotiate for all of Lebanon. It would need to include full implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and provide credible guarantees for the security of Israel's northern border.

The absence of a reference to the right of security and respect for the territorial integrity of all States of the region from any draft resolution which might emerge from this resumed session of the General Assembly would concern us. We would wish to see a concerted effort by all concerned Member States to seek to ensure that any draft resolution put before the General Assembly is balanced in its treatment of the sovereign rights of each of the parties to the present conflict. Israel has a right and a responsibility within international law to guarantee its security against terrorist attacks. Lebanon and its people, self-evidently, also have the rights guaranteed them under the Charter of the United Nations.

In the prevailing circumstances, we should take every care to avoid steps which would prejudge the outcomes of complex negotiations currently under way. We should act in ways which support the possibility that the negotiations will bring about an immediate cease-fire. We also believe that any outcomes from this resumed session of the General Assembly should clearly support the need for a comprehensive approach to dealing with the present human tragedy and conflict.

Furthermore, we should all bear very seriously in mind that any resolution adopted by the Assembly on a matter as important as the present one will reflect upon the standing and respect accorded to the Assembly, and Australia wants to see that standing and that respect remain high.

In conclusion, the case for humanitarian assistance to alleviate suffering and to assist the Government of Lebanon in the reconstruction of the country is clear. In the wake of the events in the last two weeks, Australia has made emergency contributions to Lebanon to help meet the immediate needs of the displaced people for medicine, food and blankets, and Australia will continue to support efforts for securing the peace in the region and for the reconstruction and the prosperity of Lebanon.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): It is with great sadness that my delegation joins other members of the United Nations who spoke earlier to express our shock at the ongoing military confrontation in Lebanon, which has resulted in the killing of innocent civilians, including women and children, and the destruction of property and infrastructure.

The positive evolution of the peace process exemplified by the peace negotiations between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel and Jordan and Israel, as well as the understanding in principle of continuing negotiations with Syria, had generated hope and prospects for a comprehensive peaceful settlement in the Middle East region. It is the turn of events of the last two weeks that Tanzania finds disquieting and disturbing, to say the least.

Tanzania is particularly concerned at the extension of the conflict in Lebanon, which undermines the prospects for peace in the region, and at the frustration of the efforts made so far to pursue the cause of peace. Tanzania abhors the indiscriminate killing and shelling of innocent civilians and the wanton destruction of property. Tanzania therefore joins all the delegations that are calling for an immediate halt to the military confrontation in Lebanon and further calls upon the parties to the conflict to institute an immediate cease-fire and proceed with the negotiations on a mutually agreeable framework for peace.

The Middle East question is replete with Security Council resolutions. But what is glaringly evident is the selectiveness and double standards in their implementation. We therefore call for the strict implementation of resolution 425 (1978) by the parties concerned.

In conclusion, Tanzania reiterates its position that lasting peace in the Middle East will depend upon the recognition of the rights of all and a commitment to peaceful settlement of disputes. But there can be no lasting peace where there is foreign occupation in any land.

Mr. Bune (Fiji): Fiji is a small country in the South Pacific. It is far removed from the current theatre of conflict in the Middle East. But we are a nation committed to peace in our world and to a peaceful resolution of the Middle East situation. In keeping with that commitment, we have been an active participant in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for the last 18 years. Our nation was therefore totally shocked and deeply saddened by the renewed outbreak of hostilities in southern Lebanon and the indiscriminate shelling by Israel of the Fiji UNIFIL camp at Qana, in which 135 civilians have so far been killed and over 200 injured, including four peace-keeping soldiers from my country.

My Government has communicated to the Government of Israel its condemnation of the unwarranted attack on the Fiji UNIFIL camp at Qana by

Israel on 18 April. But while we condemn Israel for the Qana attack, we realize that the conflict is not one-sided. We also condemn in the strongest terms all forms of terrorism and the slaughter of innocent people, which have brought untold suffering to innocent communities in Israel. Fiji believes that the peace process must include the right of the Lebanese people to territorial integrity and sovereignty. We therefore reaffirm our commitment to Security Council resolution 425 (1978), on the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries.

The Government of Fiji realizes and recognizes that peace remains at the heart of the solution which combined diplomatic efforts are now seeking. We believe that in order to arrive at a solution, all hostilities must come to an end.

Fiji calls for an immediate cease-fire between the parties concerned. We therefore welcome Security Council resolution 1052 (1996), adopted unanimously on 18 April. Fiji supports fully the efforts being made by the United States and other countries to bring an end to the hostilities in the area and to encourage and abet a peaceful resolution.

We wish to add our support to the international call to assist the Lebanese Government in its reconstruction efforts, and all those civilians who have been displaced as a result of the hostilities. There are men, women and children who are in pain, who are suffering and who are crying out for our urgent help and assistance. Let us be merciful to them.

In conclusion, I wish to inform the Assembly that despite our shock and our sadness, Fiji's commitment to international peace and to the peace process in the Middle East remains unwavering. The morale and spirits of our troops remain high. Fiji will continue to participate in UNIFIL as long as required by the United Nations and the international community.

It is now up to the international community, and especially the United Nations, to show its effectiveness by prevailing upon a delinquent Member to adhere to the standards of conduct that are inherent in membership of this Organization, which some have described as mankind's last hope for peace and progress on Earth.

The Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), His Excellency Mr. Hamid Algabid, in his last press statement on this tragic situation, issued on 20 April 1996, pointed out that the latest massacre perpetrated by Israel against innocent Lebanese civilians who were seeking refuge in the United Nations facilities is clear evidence of the brutality of this aggression.

At the same time, the Islamic group at the United Nations, having urgently met at the ambassadorial level on 17 April, strongly condemned these heinous acts through its communiqué issued after the session.

These reactions from the OIC, which I know are shared by men and women of peace and good will worldwide, must not, however, distract us from the fact that, as I stated before the Security Council, my organization does not condone terrorism of any kind, anywhere, and has always supported proposals for the containment of terrorism in all international forums.

In the present hour of Lebanon's predicament, we extend to the Government and people of Lebanon the firm support and solidarity of the OIC General Secretariat and of its entire membership of 52 sovereign States — all Members of the United Nations — in upholding its sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right of security of its citizens within its internationally recognized borders.

We call upon the international community to put an immediate end to this aggression and to exert pressure on Israel to abide by Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls for complete Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon. This alone would ensure peace and security in the region.

We also call, in no uncertain terms, for the safe return of the displaced persons in the south of Lebanon and for compensation by Israel for the survivors of the deceased and reparations for the properties and public services that its military action has destroyed and disrupted.

Let me reiterate, in conclusion, the OIC's call for full support for the draft resolution contained in document A/50/L.70, introduced by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Indonesia, which we hope this Assembly will adopt at the end of this debate and which may somewhat dissipate the atmosphere of injustice prevailing since the adoption last week of Security Council resolution 1052 (1996). The draft resolution, in our view, is commensurate with the reality and the gravity of the situation.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 3237 (XXIX), of 22 November 1974, and 43/177, of 15 December 1988, I now call on the observer for Palestine.

Mrs. Barghouti (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On behalf of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, I have the honour to address this resumed session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 44, entitled "The situation in the Middle East", to consider the continuing Israeli aggression against Lebanon. The convening of this session reflects the high degree of concern of the international community regarding this matter, as well as its concern for reaching an immediate solution to alleviate the suffering of the Lebanese people.

The recent Israeli attacks caused immense suffering and great losses for our brotherly Lebanese people, resulting in the deaths of over 100 civilians, hundreds of casualties, thousands of refugees and the widespread destruction of homes and camps. They also led to the destruction of Lebanese economic and social infrastructure. Moreover, this aggression did great damage to the Middle East peace process, which is at a very critical stage.

We condemn the Israeli attacks on Lebanese villages and cities, including the capital, Beirut. We condemn in particular the massacre at Qana last week, where more than 100 innocent refugees were killed and hundreds more were wounded as a result of Israeli shelling. That attack is deplorable also because it occurred at a United Nations base in Lebanon where Fijian troops of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) were stationed and where those civilians had taken refuge and sought protection from Israeli bombardment.

We reiterate our solidarity with the Lebanese people in their steadfastness and determination to bring the Israeli occupation of their land to an end. In this regard, the Palestinian National Council, which is now holding its twenty-first session, in Gaza, has given special attention to the deteriorating situation in Lebanon. It has expressed the unwavering support of the Palestinian people for the Lebanese people at this critical time. Moreover, at the opening meeting of the Council, President Yasser Arafat called for an Arab summit to address both the situation in Lebanon and the situation in occupied Palestine.

Throughout history, the link between the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples has always been strong. The Palestinian people will never forget the long years of support given by the Lebanese people when the Palestine Liberation Organization had its headquarters in Lebanon; nor will they forget the many sacrifices made by the Lebanese people in support of our shared struggle for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, on the basis of the resolutions of the international community, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as the principle of land of peace.

We had hoped that the Security Council would be able to undertake and discharge its responsibilities and duties in a more appropriate manner, in terms of the timing and the substance of the position it adopted with regard to the tragic situation in Lebanon. In this context, we reaffirm the need for the Security Council to work seriously and urgently to bring an immediate end to the Israeli aggression and to enforce the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, particularly resolution 425 (1978).

Nevertheless, the convening of this resumed session of the General Assembly is truly indicative of the international community's rejection of the Israeli aggression and support for the Lebanese people to overcome this tragic situation. We therefore call upon the General Assembly to shoulder its responsibility by adopting a draft resolution condemning the Israeli attacks, calling for an immediate cease-fire and offering humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of the Lebanese people and to allow Lebanon to regain security, stability and unity.

Mr. Castaneda-Cornejo (El Salvador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me first of all to underline the significance of the presence at this resumed session of the General Assembly of His Excellency the President of Lebanon, Mr. Elias Hraoui. The Government and the people of El Salvador join in solidarity with the Government and the people of Lebanon in the wake of the tragedy that country has suffered.

The President returned to the Chair.

The recent events in Lebanon have been the object of concern in the international community, as reflected in the debates during the meetings convened on an urgent basis to consider the issue in the Security Council, which unanimously adopted resolution 1052 (1996) last week. That resolution calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and for supporting diplomatic efforts towards

that end. This week in the General Assembly we have met with the same objective: to seek the means of achieving peace in that region.

El Salvador wishes to place on the record its concern over the regrettable events that have resulted in the loss of many lives, many injuries and many displaced persons, as well as the destruction of physical infrastructure in the States directly involved. It must be recognized that the effects on the territory and population of Lebanon have been by far the more serious ones, and even members of the United Nations mission in Lebanon have lost their lives. The situation is all the more worrisome because of its possible repercussions on the Middle East peace process. This process had gained strength and had achieved significant progress since the Madrid Conference of 1991.

El Salvador is completely convinced that the use of force or violence in any form is not the right way to resolve disputes or conflicts. We believe that the harmonization of views, dialogue and negotiations are the rational and effective means of safeguarding the interests and the rights of the parties to a conflict and, consequently, they are the most solid and effective means of achieving firm and lasting agreements.

In this context, I wish to reaffirm the position of El Salvador on the situation in the Middle East, particularly as regards the situation now prevailing in Lebanon.

In accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, we reject the use of force or the threat of the use of force as a means of resolving differences or disputes.

We have consistently condemned and repudiated acts of terrorism in any form at the regional and global levels, regardless of who commits them.

Respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right of all States of the region, without exception, to live in peace within secure borders are essential elements for a firm and lasting peace.

We support diplomatic efforts to achieve and guarantee an immediate cessation of hostilities in Lebanon, along with efforts for the adoption of measures to make the peace process viable in the Middle East, with the participation of all States involved in the conflict.

We believe that all the parties with interests in the region, as Members of the United Nations, have rights and duties under the Charter. For this reason, they are duty-bound to comply with the resolutions of the Security Council and, in this case, specifically with resolution 425 (1978), which would allow Lebanon to exercise fully its sovereign rights and political independence and to enjoy territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

In conclusion, we associate ourselves with the appeal made repeatedly by various speakers for the parties immediately to cease hostilities and seek a solution to their differences through peaceful means. We reaffirm the need to respect the norms of international humanitarian law and to guarantee the safety and security of the members of the United Nations mission in Lebanon so that they can fulfil their mandate in the maintenance of peace and contribute to the attainment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX), of 10 October 1975, I now call on the Permanent Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Ansay (Organization of the Islamic Conference): When I addressed this Assembly earlier on other issues, I had the opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Bureau on being elected to your high offices. Permit me to reiterate my organization's assurances of its fullest cooperation in the discharge of the important responsibilities you are shouldering during the current session of the General Assembly.

The reasons for convening this resumed session are serious. The situation in Lebanon, perpetuated by Israeli attacks from the air and from the sea, is extremely grave.

In the address delivered so graciously the day before yesterday by His Excellency Mr. Elias Hraoui, President of Lebanon, we heard about the latest developments in the grave situation and about the continued death and destruction being inflicted by Israeli armed actions on the innocent civilian population. We offer our condolences, and our hearts go out to the gallant people of Lebanon for whom we have feelings of utmost admiration for their courage in continuing the struggle against aggression.

In my intervention before the Security Council a week ago, I stated the factors that were hindering peace and throwing the peace process into further jeopardy: Israel's latest fierce aerial attacks on Lebanese territories,

including Beirut, which killed many innocent men, women and children and caused the displacement and mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians; its bombing of even ambulances; its indiscriminate destruction of civilian property and punitive demolition of Palestinian homes; its decision to freeze the peace negotiations; its continued occupation of Arab territories in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria; and its frequent closing of borders to the Palestinian population, depriving them of their livelihoods and access to much-needed medical and other essential facilities.

The signals given in these expressions of concern by my organization, and by so many other delegates representing a very sizeable portion of the membership of the United Nations in equally strong terms, were clear enough and should have influenced Israel to heed the wishes of the world community at large and cease its belligerent interventions in and violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. Instead, most regrettably, it has continued with its aerial attacks on primarily civilian targets in Lebanon and even augmented them with bombing from the sea, thereby enlarging the scope of the death and destruction it has unleashed on the civilian population of Lebanon.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

In order to allow consultations to proceed on draft resolution A/50/L.70, I propose that we suspend the meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 12.20 p.m. and resumed at 12.45 p.m.

Agenda item 120 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

The President: I should like to inform Members that Yemen has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

The President: This information will be reflected in an addendum to document A/50/888.

Mr. Camacho Omiste (Bolivia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is my honour to inform the General Assembly that Bolivia has also made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter. It therefore has the right to exercise its vote.

However, I have been informed that, for internal administrative reasons, the Secretariat has not yet informed the presidency of the payment made. This situation does fall under the provisions of Article 19, since it is due rather to an internal administrative situation in the Secretariat. I should appreciate it if the General Assembly would take note of this situation.

Agenda item 44 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Draft resolution A/50/L.70

The President: In the course of his introduction to draft resolution A/50/L.70, the representative of Indonesia informed the General Assembly that the draft resolution was now entitled "The Israeli military attacks against Lebanon and their consequences".

In view of the requests of a number of members that we dispose of this item expeditiously, I should like to consult the Assembly with a view to ascertaining whether it agrees to proceed immediately to consider draft resolution A/50/L.70, as orally revised by the representative of Indonesia.

In this connection, since the draft resolution was circulated only this morning, it would be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

A number of representatives wish to speak on points of order. I shall now call on them.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): It is only by chance that I am here this afternoon, since we had assumed that the decision on the draft resolution distributed this morning would be taken tomorrow.

In this situation, we request the Assembly not to waive rule 78 and not to decide to put the draft resolution to the vote today. The reason for this is simple: this issue is extremely complicated, and the majority of delegations, including mine, would like the General Assembly to have as much unity as possible.

That is why we are actively in contact with the sponsors and other delegations. We believe that, in the interest of the General Assembly's unity on this important matter and in order to attract the support of the maximum number of delegations for the initiative of the Arab Group, it would only be fair that we all have the 24 hours provided for in rule 78. That would also allow us to solve the difficult problem of receiving instructions from our capitals, as will be necessary if this text is put to the vote.

Through you, Sir, I appeal to all the sponsors of the draft resolution to understand our request and, in our common interest, to agree to put the draft resolution to the vote tomorrow, in accordance with rule 78 of the General Assembly's rules of procedure.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): On behalf of my delegation, I wish to echo the words of my colleague from the Russian Federation. This is a very delicate issue, and I believe that the Assembly will agree with my delegation that the necessary consultations with our capitals will enable us to participate with greater precision. The rule of procedure quoted earlier is indicative of the fact that, whenever such delicate issues come before this house, it becomes necessary for heads of delegations to consult with their capitals.

I wish to cite an example. A soccer player is about to come onto the pitch, knowing what position he will take when he participates in the game. Then, the referee suddenly changes the name of the game. I am sure that the President will agree with me that that might frustrate the player.

Given the fact that the title of this draft resolution has now been changed, it becomes a necessity for my delegation to be given time to liaise with the capital. I seek the indulgence of the presidency of this house to consider my request that I, on behalf of my delegation, be given time just to consult. Twenty-four hours would do.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt): I am speaking on behalf of the sponsors of draft resolution A/50/L.70.

The draft resolution was submitted yesterday and has been in circulation among Member States for more than 48 hours. Rule 78 very clearly says, as you, Mr. President, read out:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

The text of the draft resolution before us is dated not today, 25 April, but 24 April, "the preceding day", and every delegation has had a copy of it.

I listened with keen attention to the statements of the Permanent Representatives of the Russian Federation and Swaziland. I understand fully their point of view. Many delegations have had the draft resolution before them, and the sponsors on whose behalf I am speaking would like the vote to be taken today and now.

Mr. Shah (India): I have listened to the morning's discussion with a great deal of attention and, while my delegation has considerable respect for the position expressed by the delegations of the Russian Federation and Swaziland, we fully support the statement just made by the representative of Egypt.

As has been mentioned, the draft resolution bears the date of 24 April, and rule 78 makes it very clear that the circulation to all delegations has to be "not later than the day preceding the meeting" in which the vote is to be taken.

My delegation would therefore like to support the position expressed by the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Londoño-Paredes (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I listened very attentively to the statements of our colleagues from the Russian Federation and Swaziland. Their views notwithstanding, my delegation fully supports the position and the ideas expressed by the Ambassador of Egypt on behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution, as well as the views expressed by the Ambassador of India.

The President: We have heard some requests for the vote to take place today and others for it to take place tomorrow.

Rule 78 says that, as a general rule, we should have a 24-hour delay, but the Assembly can waive that rule if it so decides. Thus, I should like to ask the sponsors of the draft resolution if they wish to present a formal request for the vote to take place today. If they do so wish, I will ask the General Assembly if it so decides.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt): As one of the sponsors, I think that we owe the Assembly an explanation as to why we want the vote now. This is a procedural motion, I understand, but I should like to appeal to everyone to realize that, with every delay, more people are dying in Lebanon and bombardments are taking place; today, another tragedy occurred. The sponsors believe that the sooner the General Assembly votes, the better. That is why, on behalf of the sponsors, I formally ask that we vote now on the draft resolution.

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to vote today? Or does the Assembly wish to vote on the question of whether we shall vote today or tomorrow? In other words, is there a consensus that we vote today or shall we put that question to a vote?

Does any member request a formal vote on the question of waiving rule 78 of the rules of procedure?

As I hear no objection, may I take it that the Assembly agrees with the request to vote today?

It was so decided.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/50/L.70, as orally revised.

I call on the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): I should like to propose an oral amendment to the draft resolution. If I may be permitted, I am prepared to do so now.

The President: We have already begun the voting process. Thus, I can allow the Russian Federation to present an oral amendment to the draft resolution only if there is no objection from the Assembly.

If I hear no objection, the Russian Federation will now make its proposed amendment.

It was so decided.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): I thank all of my colleagues for generously giving me an opportunity to speak on this question and to propose my amendment. I understand that we have already begun the voting process, but I hope that many will agree that in this process there has been an unexpected turn of events and that we might allow each other some leeway.

The amendment is as follows. We propose the addition to the text of a new operative paragraph to follow paragraph 5. This new paragraph 5 *bis* would read:

> "*Confirms* the rights of all States in the region to live in peace and security within their internationally recognized boundaries".

For us, this principle is very important. We have explained our position to the sponsors of the draft resolution, and they are very familiar with it. We proposed other amendments to the text but have now pared them down to a single one, which we feel does not contradict the content of the draft resolution, especially in the light of information we have received from the Middle East in recent days.

I can assure the sponsors that, if this amendment is adopted, my delegation, despite its very difficult position, will be able to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

The President: I call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on a point of order.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I am speaking on a point of order in reference to the rules of procedure that must be followed, especially rule 128, which stipulates that:

> "After the Chairman has announced the beginning of voting, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order in connection with the actual conduct of the voting."

There was no such point of order, because the representative of the Russian Federation submitted an

amendment unrelated to such a point of order. Rule 128 continues:

> "The Chairman may permit members to explain their votes, either before or after the voting, except when the vote is taken by secret ballot. The Chairman may limit the time to be allowed for such explanations. The Chairman shall not permit the proposer of a proposal or of an amendment to explain his vote on his own proposal or amendment."

For these reasons, I am asking the President to begin the voting on the draft resolution without taking the amendment into account.

The President: I must remind members that I put this precise question to the Assembly a while ago. The Assembly unanimously decided to agree to hear the proposal of an amendment by the Russian Federation. It was a unanimous decision, so I think that this problem has already been solved.

Two representatives have requested to speak on a point of order. I shall now call on them.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): I would just like a clarification on the statement that you have just made, Mr. President. Is it my understanding that a unanimous decision of the General Assembly can overturn the Assembly's rules of procedure? The rules of procedure do not give the General Assembly permission to overturn rule 128 by a decision. If the ruling that has just been made, is to set a precedent, it will mean that at any stage, by decision, the General Assembly can overturn its own rules of procedure. Is that the ruling of the President?

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): Although it is very awkward for my colleagues and me to discuss procedure, I have asked to speak on a point of order for the following reason.

When you, Mr. President, stated that the Assembly was to proceed to the voting on the draft resolution, I immediately raised my hand to speak on a point of order and to state that, before we went to the voting, I wished to propose an amendment. My request to speak was not noticed immediately, and I was called on only after you had spoken further. By that time, you had already stated that we had begun the voting process.

I understand that you and your assistant from the Secretariat cannot see every member at once. Hence, you called on me a bit late. Let us therefore discuss the additional technical means we require in this Hall for a representative to be seen immediately upon raising his hand.

I repeat that it is very uncomfortable for me to explain all this after the fact, but I am forced to do so because my colleagues decided to turn this into a procedural discussion. We feel that the President's ruling was correct and was not at all preordained. I appeal to my colleagues from the Syrian Arab Republic and Pakistan, and to the sponsors as a whole, to give the members of the General Assembly the opportunity to express their opinions about my proposed amendment. This is especially important to my delegation because, as I have said, if the amendment is approved, we shall be able to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

I hope that these unquestionably important procedural ideas will not distract us from the main task before the Assembly today.

The President: Having heard the explanation offered by the Russian Federation, I should just like to add the following.

When I put to the Assembly the question as to whether it would allow the Russian Federation to present an oral amendment at that precise moment, that procedure could have been challenged by any member's saying that we were no longer at a point at which such a question could be put to the Assembly. But no member challenged that procedure, at that moment; everybody agreed to vote on it, and everybody voted. There was a unanimous vote on that question.

I therefore think that it is now too late to raise the question of whether we have voted legally or illegally. It can be discussed in other forums, but we have decided to vote, we have voted and the result of the vote has been announced. I do not think that we should now go back to the moment prior to that vote. I think that we should proceed with our meeting. The question we have to face now is the vote on the draft resolution and on the amendment.

Before we proceed to consider draft resolution A/50/L.70, as orally revised, I propose that the meeting be suspended for five minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 1.20 p.m. and resumed at 1.25 p.m.

The President: I should like to say that we have received a request to circulate the Russian amendment in written form. The same will be done, of course, in the case of any other amendments that may be submitted.

In view of that request, we cannot proceed now. We shall therefore adjourn and meet again this afternoon at 3.30.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.